

Minutes

**Minutes of Area Panel 4 held on
3rd September 2009
@ Mary Potter Centre
6.00-8.00pm**

Present:

Chris Newton – Chair (CN), Frank Griffiths (FG), Linford Stevens (LS), Cllr Tony Marshall - NCC (TM), Gill Moy – NCH (GM), Shaun Elliott – NCH (SE), Andrew Filer – NCH (AF)

Apologies:

Sue Haslett – NCC (now left NCC), Steve Harrison – NCC (new Neighbourhood manager)

1 Welcome and introductions

2 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were signed off as a true representation of the meeting

3 Matters arising

- 3.1** A general discussion took place over the poor attendance at the Panel meetings. Ideas were sought of what could be done to improve the situation. AF advised that there were 26 people on the mailing list for the Panel, including 6 recent additions following the recent Get Involved Week. It was decided AF would send a survey to people on the mailing list to see if an alternative day, time or venue would increase attendance. AF advised there was only one resident body up and running in the area, and with the diversity and the transient population there was, attending meetings is not the preferred method of involvement.

Action

AF

3.2 A further discussion then took place with regard to the Mary Potter Centre, with regard to the lack of signage, notice board space, and leaflet space. It was agreed SE would draft a letter to the management company of the Mary Potter Centre, which CN would agree and sign on the Panels behalf, complaining about the above issues. TM agreed to take this up with the Area Committee also.

SE

TM

4 **Environmental schemes 2009/2010**

4.1 SE presented on this item and confirmed £46k is available per ward for schemes this financial year. A handout was given to participants highlighting the schemes that had been put forward (enclosed). Due to Radford & Park ward having more properties; more environmental schemes have been identified. No costs have yet to be received, but it is likely priority schemes will need to be identified in Radford & Park ward. Costs should be received shortly, so will be sent out with the minutes.

4.2 Each area was looked at, with all schemes agreed with the exception of the following, which needed further investigation:

- Renewal of pigeon netting to Highurst Ct, Clifford Ct, and Highcross Ct.
- Resurfacing of car park areas at Auckland Cl, Cleveland Cl, Hopedale Cl and Lismore Cl.
- Provide car bays adjacent to 152 Birkin Avenue
- Hard standing requests on Camomile Gardens.

4.3 It was agreed consultation was required with local crime advisors with regard to the fencing schemes, as inappropriate fencing could cause other problems

4.4 SE is attending a Public Realm meeting next week, where some of the issues could also be picked up, so NCC would possibly fund these. SE will feedback at the next meeting

5 **Housing service Delivery / Accommodation**

5.1 GM presented this item, giving an update on the consultation so far.

5.2 Initial feedback from Housemark (a benchmarking organisation) still shows that NCH is an expensive / under performing organisation, though improving

since last years data. Early results from this years STATUS survey have also been positive with higher numbers of tenants and leaseholders wishing to contact us by telephone or electronically, rather than visit an office. This has resulted in NCH extending the existing call centre which will free-up the time of front line staff to be more pro-active and out on their patches, but will also improve consistency and be open for longer hours. Appointment booking will also be available if a visit is required.

5.3 Possible changes in legislation with regard to the way the housing revenue account is funded, and an expected reduction in funding after the next election has meant that NCH are planning for a 20% reduction in spending. This has resulted in several staff vacancies being left open, and consultation with tenants and leaseholders on the closing of some housing offices due to the cost of staffing them. The current situation after the first round of consultation is that the Bilborough, Lenton and Victoria Centre offices will only be open certain days each week from Monday 7th September. This will then be reviewed after 3 months. NCH are also looking at the possibility of sharing facilities with other organisations to reduce costs.

5.4 NCH obviously need to appreciate the requirements of some tenants and leaseholders who are older or vulnerable.

5.5 LS made a comment that some older / vulnerable tenants and leaseholders are scared of Direct Debits due to getting charges should insufficient funds be available in their accounts, so would prefer to pay by cash. GM added that NCH need to educate tenants and leaseholders that there are various other ways to pay bills such as PayPoint outlets which are wide spread throughout Nottingham. A mis-conception was also raised at a previous meeting, where tenants and leaseholders thought they paid a charge for Direct debits. This is **not** the case, though a charge is liable to NCH. NCh continued that NCH is now one of the only organisations that has a rent collector, which poses a significant health and safety risk, not only to the rent collector but also to the tenants r leaseholders they visit, as they could have substantial amounts of cash on them. SE advised that at the Mary Potter centre cash payments have increased, but for things such as Council Tax and other rates. The payments of rent have actually decreased slightly.

<u>5.6</u>	<p>FG added that he did not visit a Housing Office, as he paid his rent by Direct Debit, and contacted NCH by telephone if required, but thanked GM for coming along, and requested this item on the agenda for future meetings. The Panel agreed this would be included on future agendas. FG continued by saying that NCH need to critically look at the use consultants within the organisation. GM responded by saying that consultants are now only used in specialist fields, such as setting up the new contact centre, though NCH staff will shadow these consultants to receive 'free' training. The numbers of agency staff has also reduced.</p>	
<u>5.7</u>	<p>GM finished by saying that these changes are not all definitely happening, but NCH need to be prepared, and have consulted with tenants and leaseholders on any possible changes in the future.</p>	
<u>6</u>	<p><u>Area Panel forward planning & attendance</u></p>	
	<p>This item had been covered under Matters arising</p>	
<u>7</u>	<p><u>Performance report</u></p>	
<u>7.1</u>	<p>SE went through the overview of NCHs performance from April to 31st July 2009.</p>	
<u>7.2</u>	<p>FG requested clarification on two of the items. It was confirmed the 'New tenants satisfied with the overall service' and 'Customers satisfied with the responsive repairs service' is given as a mark out of 10, in line with the Vision Management System.</p>	